1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

Geidam in the north, where another anthropologist, Abraham Rosman, and his wife were working. Discussions with Dr. and Mrs. Rosman helped all of us to see many of the unique features of Kanuri life that stemmed from our particular towns as against more general Kanuri patterns of behavior that were widespread throughout the society. We also became acutely aware of the kinds of variations that could occur across communities as they varied in size, ethnic composition, and quality of the political leadership. At the end of the first field trip, my wife and I spent three months in the capital city of Maiduguri looking at government reports and district notebooks, and acquainting ourselves with many of the special activities that characterize courtly life at the center of the emirate.

In 1964 and again in 1965 I returned to Bornu. On my previous visit the country had been a colonial holding of Great Britain, now it was part of the independent nation of Nigeria. My task in this second visit was to gather statistics on marriage and on divorce rates. But it also gave me a chance to see old friends, and catch up on what had been happening locally since my last visit seven years earlier. Some changes were readily apparent. A large number of deep wells were sunk all over the province, and these now provide enough water for a greatly expanded livestock population. Everywhere the cattle are healthier, fatter, and above all much more in evidence. They block roads and are seen herded in large numbers to and fro wherever one wanders over the countryside. Furthermore the people are less afflicted by parasites because the deep water is uncontaminated, as much of it was not during my first visit. There is now a large modern abattoir and a ground-nut oil refinery in the capital city, and in late 1964 the Nigerian railway finally pushed through to Maiduguri to connect the Bornu capital with Nigeria's national railway system. On the other hand, detailed questions about various traditional practices indicated that there have been few changes at the cultural and social level. At the political level where there were English District Officers and other officials of the regional government, now these posts are filled by Nigerians, generally from other parts of northern Nigeria. However it is for the most part correct to use the present tense in describing Bornu, and when this is not true I will attempt to mention the special circumstances that have brought on the changes.

Magumeri, our home for seventeen months in 1956 and 1957, sits on top of one of the ridges of Bornu, and there is a steep climb onto it from the motor road that travels along the bottom of the ridge for most of the year. During the rains, the road runs along the sandy top of the ridge, to keep clear of the large muddy areas formed at the ridge bottom. Magumeri includes approximately 2000 people about half of whom live in surrounding hamlets within the boundaries of the village area. It is a district capital and thus has a two-room primary school, a court house, and the large compound of the district head who administers twenty-one village areas, containing 50,000 people, living in an area of approximately 850 square miles. The village has a weekly market on Sunday, and is divided up into a number of wards under the village area head who is also the political leader of its surrounding hamlets and officially the political subordinate of the district head. Except for the fact that it has a somewhat lower proportion of non-Kanuri compared to most others, Magumeri is a "typical" Bornu village in terms of its size, occupational ranges of the population, and influences it receives from the capital and the world beyond the emirate. Indeed this is why I chose to spend most of my time

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The District Organization

In Bornu the lawan represents a link between the higher political authorities and the ordinary peasant. To the people in the rural areas he is the most apparent and easily reached member of the ruling classes. Their hamlet and ward heads are leaders but only in a local sense, while the lawan represents the authority of the central emirate government since he is officially appointed by this body. To many ordinary villagers the exact nature of the political organization above the level of the lawan is not at all clear. They know that beyond the lawan there is the district head and above him the Shehu of Bornu, but the various councils and agencies of the emirate government are things they know very little about in detail.

In terms of the emirate as a whole, however, the district head and his organization of the district is the pivotal political focus in Bornu. His is the office through which all central government policies from the capital are translated into action at the local level. Conversely, if there are any disturbances, irregularities in tax revenues, increases in crime, migration out of the district, or failure in any policy goals or action programs, it is to the district head that all the agencies at the center turn for an explanation.

To the lowly peasant the district head is a man in another world, a world of awesome power, riches, and courtly life. A lawan may go abroad to oversee a new well in one of his hamlets, or to mark off the boundaries of a new farm plot, or to take a tax census, but the district head rarely ever leaves his compound except for the occasional trip to oversee nomad cattle taxation, or to appear in some local ceremonial, or to attend the Shehu's court in the capital. When he does venture forth, it is a royal sally to the playing of pipes and drums, with a troop of galloping horsemen and servants brandishing swords, spears, and muzzle-loading guns. Today this is being changed somewhat by the motorcar which carries the district head quickly and silently, but district heads can still create quite a stir when they wish to go forth officially among the people.

The district organization is basically quite simple. Each of the twenty-one districts in the emirate is identified by the name of its principal village (in some cases these are quite large towns), and this latter serves as the district capital. In this capital lives the district head and his followers and all the district representatives of the various emirate civil service agencies. These include such installations as a district courthouse for the Alkali (judge) and a primary school formerly up to the end of Standard IV, now almost universally up to secondary school entrance. Formally, the district head is responsible for the administration of all the village areas and any nomadic population that may be living within the confines of the district.

The district head is appointed and installed by the Shehu in consultation with his council and the local representatives of the Northern Nigerian government. Only high ranking men in the state are considered and almost all the present district heads are sons of men who held a similar position. There is a growing tendency to try to get men who have some western education, but as yet many of the present district heads speak no English and have not attended western schools. In

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which he hopes are less important. Furthermore, as in any bureaucracy, standards and their enforcement change through time, often as a result of changing personnel at the top. A new council member may have become interested in school latrines and suddenly start forcing compliance with the rules about such things. Failure to do so or to hear about the stringency with which the old previously unimportant policies are now being enforced could bring trouble to the district head who failed to comply. This is why information about policy and the cultivation of powerful friends in the central government is so important for the district head.

Before leaving the rural area a word should be said about adjudication. All leaders in the Bornu political system adjudicate disputes, and the political hierarchy itself serves as an appeals court system. Thus a peasant can take his dispute with a neighbor to his bullama (hamlet or ward head), who may decide to take the case up to the lawan (village area head), who in turn may decide to take the case to the district head. The district head may further decide to send the case over to the district court, and, if necessary, the district court can send the case into the capital city, to the court of the chief alkali of Bornu (chief judge's court). People can go directly to the judge's or district court, and in the city many do. Even with very serious cases like murder which must go into the central court in the city, the people taking the murderer into the city court most often go up the political hierarchy reporting the case each time they see another official even though there is no adjudication, thus giving recognition to their political leaders rather than going directly to a higher court.

Cases are tried by a combination of Muslim law and local custom. The chief or judge listens to the case, and if three witnesses swear for one side in a dispute but not the other, then the side whose witness has sworn wins the case. If no one swears evidence or too many people swear on both sides, then the judge listens while his assistant in the court interrogates the parties involved. The judge, whoever he may be, then makes a decision. Very often the interrogation itself tends to move the evidence towards one side in a dispute or another. Usually if a crowd gathers, one can see by simply listening to the crowd which side of the court case is winning the argument. On the whole decisions are just unless there have been previous and difficult relations between the adjudicator and any of the parties concerned. Swearing evidence in a court is called "eating the Koran"; that is to say, a person must swear on the holy book. If he tells a lie, it is believed that his hand will shrivel and he will die of horrible diseases. This belief is widespread and it is genuinely feared that the traditionally implied consequences of lying in court are in fact quite true.

The Organization at the Center

In Maiduguri at the eastern end of the royal plaza is the palace of the Shehu, flanked on one side by the mosque and on the other by the official residence of the Waziri or chief minister of the emirate. The Shehu is the formal head of government. All measures, policies, appointments, made within the state are in his name; titles are granted at official investiture ceremonies carried on in the royal palace and he is the formal leader of the religious community of the state. This is em-

632 366 368 Two other foci of the Kanuri town are the market-place and the central mosque. The market-place is of course the center for all local trade, and on the particular market day of a town, activities center in the market, which is alive with people. On Friday, the central mosque, where people gather to pray, becomes the communal center. Throughout the week the compound of the Ajia (the Ajari), should the town be the administrative center of a district, is the focus of bureaucratic activity. In addition, activity centers around other public buildings: the court, the school, the dispensary, the public reading room, etc.

369 632 463 The three foci of the Kanuri town indicated above, the Ajari, the market-place, and the mosque, are of themselves strong arguments for the urban nature of the Kanuri town. Each is typically the center of an urban activity and urban occupations. The Ajia has, under him, a range of bureaucratic specialists: the Alkali, the Chief Scribe, the Treasurer, the Department of Police, the school-teachers and dispenser. The mosque is representative of the various religious specialists: the Imam, and the many malams of the town. The market-place typifies commercial activity, which more than anything else is characteristic of urban life, with its various specialists in trade and in crafts.

E. Social Organization

611 171 182 Unlike the majority of African societies, the Kanuri do not have unilineal descent. As Meyer Fortes notes, "The more

of the dandal to watch.

368 788 The central mosque of Geidam also faces on the dandal, along its northern edge. Geidam has several smaller mosques, and although it is not necessary for a Moslem to go to the mosque to pray, Friday prayers at 2 PM (Duar) have become communal prayers. At that time almost the entire adult male community of Geidam gathers to pray. The mosque itself will hold only a small portion of the community, no more than 300 or so. All others gather under the shade of trees which line the northern and southern edges of the dandal, and while the Liman leads prayers in the mosque itself, all go through the ritual positions of prayer in unison following his lead. On the Friday Sabbath, the mosque and the dandal become the focus of attention.

368 Along the dandal, to the right and left of the entrance-way to the Ajari, are a number of buildings housing branches of the administration of the town. On the northern edge is the police charge-office, the court, and the community reading room. The courthouse serves daily as a center of activity. On the southern edge are the police barracks, the prison, the dispensary and [554] the primary school. Along with these compounds housing various types of officialdom are to be found the compounds of several important men whose gateways also face out onto the dandal.

The dandal, leading up to the chinna of the political head of a town, is the traditional political center of that town. Just as the market-place serves as the focus of all local commerce, the dandal serves as the focus of political, ceremonial and religious activity.

[GEIDAM]

632 river. The compounds of several wealthy Hausa traders face the
[563] market-place in the western end of Lowan Kolo Kolo's ward. The
[463] butchers, who are almost all Hausa and have a Hausa head-man, are within Lowan Kolo Kolo's ward but fall under the jurisdiction of the Hausa Lowan.

632 563 The third ward making up the town of Geidam has only a sprinkling of Kanuri living there. It is the most populous ward of the three and is predominantly Hausa. Its Lowan is Serakin Garba, a prominent member of the Hausa community. This ward has been growing most rapidly in recent years, and the direction of expansion has been south and west, where whole new sections have grown up. Along the western border of the town, stretching southward, live all the Ibos and Yorubas, Southern Nigerians and predominantly Christian, numbering several hundred.
[366] A string of small canteens run by Ibos and Yorubas faces the
[368] western border. In this ward is to be found the church for
[273] Christian members of the Geidam community, and the Charity Hotel where beer is sold.

632 563 Ethnic stratification is very marked in Geidam. All southerners, Ibos and Yorubas, live in the Hausa ward along with almost the entire Hausa population of Geidam. Only a scattering
632 563 167 of Hausas are found in the Kanuri wards. Within the Kanuri wards are found small clusters of other tribes, notably Bouzous and Dagora, serfs of the Tuareg who come down into the settled plains area to towns like Geidam, where they work at menial jobs for periods of time. When they have accumulated some money they re-

634 Like other district capitals,
[621] Magumeri's highest ranking person is the District Head. As a district
[368] capital it also contains a Junior Primary School, a court house, an infrequently used District Council House, and a district office in which the tax records are kept by a Chief Scribe. These features are shown in the diagram below.

361 Diagram Map of Magumeri Village
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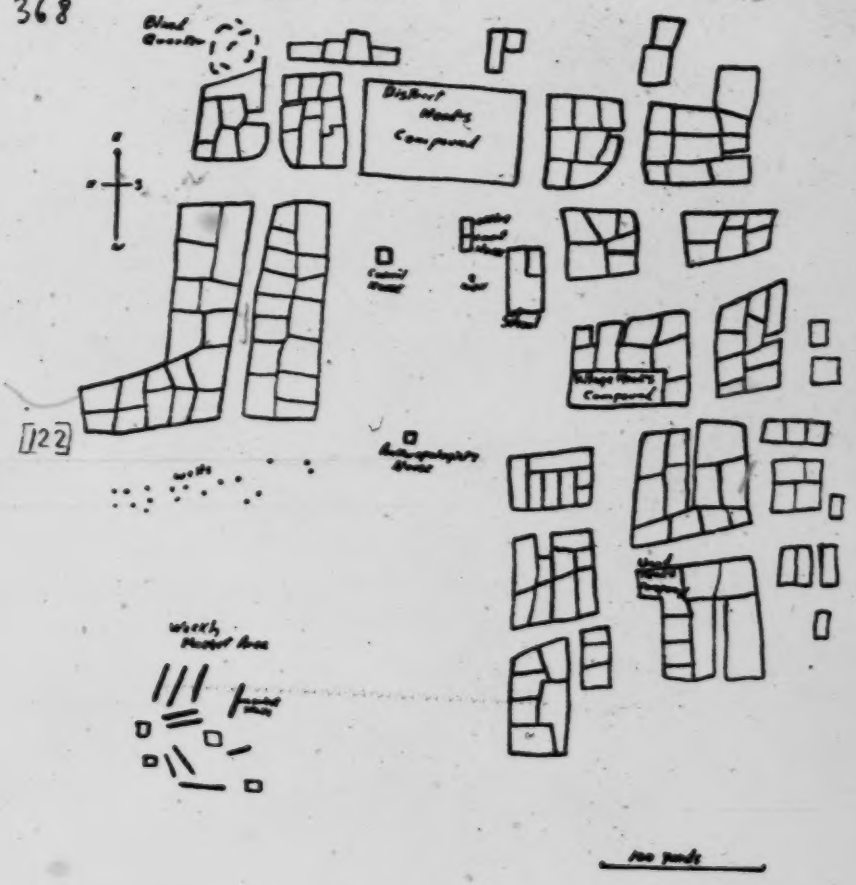

634 The District organisation is roughly similar throughout the twenty-one such divisions in Borno Emirate. Each District shares the [368] name of its chief town. This town serves as the District capital and houses the DH and his followers, the District representatives of the N.A., a District court house for the Alkali (District judge), and a [491] Junior Primary School. Today most District capitals are connected to the Emirate capital by motor road. Formally, the DH is responsible for the administration of all village areas within the confines of his District.

634 A DH is formally appointed and installed by the Shehu in
64 consultation with his Council and the Colonial officials. Only high ranking men in the state are considered, and in every case but one, all present DH's are the sons of men who held the same rank. In the contemporary scene British ratification means that the choice must be weighted towards a literate English speaker wherever possible. The Shehu must feel that he is obtaining a loyal follower, and must benefit materially from the choice, by gifts in cash and kind from the would-be DH. (This latter action is illegal and unfortunately there is insufficient information for the writer to make a confident descriptive statement about gift giving by would-be office holders). Finally, the Shehu's Council must be won over or at least some of them, so that they will either support the aspirant or split on their opposition to him.

634 The DH's compound is supplied by the N.A. and is the most [644] impressive building in town. Each DH keeps a compound in Maiduguri, in the Shehuri (palace) ward of the city, with a residing Wakil (Chief follower) who appears at the Shehu's Court to represent his superior at the 634 palace. In the District, the DH maintains a large extended household 571 organization of followers and slaves. These live in contiguous and non-

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651 not care what the causes were for a consistent drop in tax receipts, the very fact of diminution indicated an inadequate District organization. In order to obtain the nomad cattle tax the DH must have a large group of horsed followers whom he keeps in food, clothing and all other expenses. If he does not maintain this large organization he cannot collect the taxes; if he does then he must embezzle (by British standards) tax receipts in order to do so.

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648 Furthermore, as in any bureaucracy, standards and their enforcement change through time in their emphasis, often as a result of changing personnel at the top. A new N.A. councillor became interested in school latrines, and started punishing recalcitrant DH's for not maintaining adequate toilet facilities in the District school. A British officer interested in roads was replaced by one interested in prisons and so on. These conflicts in standards and changes in emphasis bring punishments in the form of dismissals, transfers to poorer paying Districts and even jail sentences - and all this emanates from the capital. The informal links between the DH and the center help him to predict the course of policy and prepare for any changes in enforcement of the conflicting standards under which he has to operate.

The Organization at the Center

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• [368] In Maiduguri at the eastern end of the royal plaza is the palace of the Shehu, the focal point of Bornu political organization.
[101] As a language and a culture Kanuri transcends its state boundaries, but within its organized bounds, the Shehu is the formal head of state. All measures, policies and appointments made by the central agencies are done in the name of the Shehu. Officially he installs office holders from the rank of Lawan up, at an investiture of "turbaning" ceremony which publicly proclaims the person's right to office. The Shehu is